

Ellis Island Oral Interview

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Education Department
Ellis Island Immigration Museum
Statue of Liberty National Monument



Interviewee: Charles W. Beller (Kalman Bilchick)

Date of Birth: November 4, 1903
Date of Interview: August 29, 1991
Interviewer: Janet Levine, Ph.D.
Immigrated from Russia at age 6 in 1910
Ellis Island Collection: EI-82

Levine:

Did your mother and father have the attitude that they wanted their children to become Americanized and they wanted them to hold on to the traditions of Jews in Russia?

Beller (Maintaining Cultural Identity):

My father would want us to go to synagogue on the high holy days; and I always went with him. The other boys, they strayed away from the religious part of it. But I always went with him on every high holiday and the like. I went to Hebrew school. I had the rabbi come to the house for awhile. Then I went to the Rabbi's place in order to learn until I was thirteen years old. And after that I didn't care about that. I wanted to be Americanized. I want to be an American, and I want to accept my opportunities and take the, make the most of them. Take advantage of everything that I could learn. And I did just that.